



Lost (and cost) in translation: the effects of dubbing and subtitling on the consumption of foreign television and cinema in Italy

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ABSTRACT

In a world where technological tools and intermediaries are making international communication and trade easier and more accessible than ever, the industry of entertainment seems to be becoming more diverse and open to products from all over the globe. People are now able to consume an almost endless supply of content and in this scope, they are faced with trade-off decisions, when it comes to choosing which product to watch. One of the main characteristics of a film or tv show that can represent a barrier to consumers is its origin and thus its original language. This is where translation practices like dubbing and subtitling come into play. As much as the role of language and translation has been analysed in economic literature, specific insight into its role in the consumption of cultural goods and media seems to have been overlooked. In this research, it is my intention to offer insight into how the translation methods of dubbing and subtitling can affect and transform a consumer's journey with an audio-visual product, with an exact focus on Italian audiences under 30. Specifically, I analyse individual tastes and preferences for the two methods, and then how dubbing and subtitling impact the attitude towards a product, the future demand for similar content and the willingness to pay in order to access it. Moreover, I analyse how other external factors such as the national context or the educational background shape consumption and appreciation for differently translated content. The paper begins with an explanation of the role of language and translation based on literature mainly coming from the disciplines of behavioural economics and cognitive psychology, and I provide some information and theories about the effect of dubbing and subtitling on the consumption of foreign TV shows and films. Second, I apply such concepts and conduct empirical research through a survey based on a sample of young audiences from Italy. I then employ statistical analysis on the survey result and draw my conclusions that dubbing and subtitling do in fact influence consumer choices in different directions, with a slight preference and more positive attitude for dubbed content, even if the population is slowly opening to new forms of consumption.

KEYWORDS: dubbing, subtitling, audio-visual products, consumption choices, consumer behaviour

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1. Introduction

Upon accepting the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Picture in 2020, Bong Joon-Ho, the director of the South Korean multi-award-winning film *Parasite* (2019), said, “*Once you overcome the one-inch-tall barrier of subtitles, you will be introduced to so many more amazing films.*” I believe that this quote can be understood as an expression of the change that is happening in the entertainment and audio-visual industry, as the accessibility and availability of TV shows and film from all around the globe is increasing in our digitalized society, both from a financial perspective, as well as geographical and cultural one. Particularly, the unprecedentedly rapid development of digital platforms and technological resources is enabling the cultural entertainment markets to become interdependent and more strongly connected. This happens not only with local audiences and stakeholders but also on a global and transnational level, offering virtually almost endless possibilities in terms of supply and demand. Hence, there is a significant possibility for cultural diversity in the trade of culture and cultural products, and this phenomenon is expected to differently shape the consumer experience.

Greater diversity in terms of country of production or origin of TV shows or films can also often imply linguistic diversity and thus the need for translation, when a localized product is to be traded internationally. Indeed, linguistic and cultural diversity may be a barrier or an opportunity for prospective customers. The various forms of the product—whether they are the original version or a translated one, through dubbing subtitling—entail different benefits and sacrifices, both financially and in terms of psychology, cognitive function, and enjoyment. Research on the topic has mainly focused on the psychological and cognitive effects of the translation methods of dubbing vs subtitling and, to the best of my knowledge, an analysis of the consequences of such practices in terms of consumption and demand is still lacking in the related literature. However, I believe this point to be interesting as the cultural and creative industries overall provide goods that may already be considered more complex to access and consume due to, for instance, their aesthetic value and meaning, and whose consumption and accessibility may be limited further by linguistic and cultural barriers. Still, it is relevant to remember that cinema and television are considered some of the most widely accessible cultural expressions, hence showing more potential in terms of audience reach and (global) diffusion. Furthermore, the consumption of dubbed or subtitled content might be connected to additional elements and motives, such as the national context and the personal background of the viewer.

The purpose of this research is to determine whether and how dubbing and subtitling as translation techniques have consequences on consumer behavior in terms of consumption and

appreciation of cultural and creative audio-visual products, with a specific focus on young audiences from Italy as my research sample. The research question is thus “To what extent does the use of dubbing or translating influence the attitude and consumption choices of individuals when it comes to foreign entertainment products?”. I aim to merge diverse concepts from different fields of study and research and understand whether linguistic and cultural hurdles underlined by the two translation methods can somewhat restrict a consumer’s perceived value of a foreign product. This value is the result of the consumption experience, as created by the emotional, cognitive and behavioural involvement an individual builds with a product. Furthermore, these factors can lower the consumer’s initial readiness to consume it, or their willingness to pay in order to access to this content.

Such a study could be helpful in learning how various people react to and perceive subtitled or dubbed entertainment products, if and why one method of translation is preferred to the other in the consumption of such products, as well as how the form of linguistic adaptation and other factors affects the viewers’ decisions and preferences.

Overall, this research can have societal relevance as production and distribution companies in the industry could benefit from knowing customer preferences and behaviour with regard to dubbing and subtitling so that they can incorporate it into their future plans and decisions. Additionally, this study may offer valuable data for a variety of fields, including policymaking, impact studies, teaching and learning of languages, as well as intercultural relationships. On the other hand, as the topic of consumer behaviour and appreciation related to dubbing and subtitling of audio-visual cultural products hasn’t been fully studied in the cultural economics literature, I believe this study to be scientifically relevant as well, as it provides new insights and cues for current and future research.

The paper proceeds as follows. In Chapter 2, I will include a literature review of previous studies coming from different fields, such as consumer studies, linguistics, psychology, and cinema studies. In Chapter 3, I will explain my research methodology which includes a survey that was administered to respondents from Italy, between the ages of 16 and 30. Lastly, in Chapter 4 I will analyse the survey results and then reach a conclusion in Chapter 5.

2. Literature review

2.1 Language and Consumption

When looking at cultural production and consumption, specifically regarding media and entertainment products, the role of languages and linguistic diversity seems to have been often overlooked by research, and the approach towards this discipline appears to be strongly influenced by cultural values and canons. Therefore, phenomena like translation in cultural trade have so far received almost no attention, despite the quantitative importance of this occurrence being demonstrated and the role translation plays in the linguistic, artistic, ideological, etc. organization and interaction of our contemporary societies (Delabastita, 1989).

Still, given the technological tools and intermediaries that have the potential to make international communication and trade easier and more accessible than ever; the cultural and creative industries, as well as the world of media and entertainment, are becoming more diverse and open to products and creators from all over the world. Indeed, the impact of linguistic diversity and thus translation is becoming more and more crucial in the contemporary technological development, creation, and offer/distribution of cultural products.

To understand the influence of translation on cultural consumption, it is relevant to underline, first of all, that language is not only a fundamental component of culture, vital to dialogue and intimately connected to thought but also a strong economic and behavioural asset. Indeed, the effect of language, linguistic diversity, and the consequent forms of translation on consumer behavior and consumption overall has been proved quite largely in relation to goods such as commodities and brands. The related research stems from the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis of linguistic relativity, a theory created by American anthropologist Edward Sapir together with businessman and amateur linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf in the 1950s. This theory in its strongest form states that language directly affects not only an individual's form of thinking but also their way of perceiving and acting towards certain elements or objects (Hunt & Agnoli, 1991).

In the field of behavioural economics and consumption studies specifically, empirical research has shown that language can affect people's expectations, judgements, and choices in addition to perception, knowledge, and associations in their minds regarding different kinds of products (Zhang *et al*, 2003). Moreover, the ability to recall specific products or attributes, as well as taste formation and preferences, are all influenced by the languages we use and are surrounded by. The reason for this is that language helps to build intrinsic mental structures in our minds that lead to top-down information processing and that influence the building and retrieval processes in categorization

(Schmitt & Zhang, 1998). From this perspective, linguistic diversity might be interpreted as a way to understand and analyse cultural differences and potential clashes. In point of fact, translation emerges as a crucial and necessary component of communication that enables us to identify tensions, evolutionary tendencies, and mechanisms operating between various linguistic and cultural systems. For instance, it is intriguing to observe how brand names translated into various languages can significantly alter consumer behaviour and recall strategies. Research such as the one conducted by Schmitt *et al.* (1994) also shows that these differences are even more evident when it comes to translation between languages that do not share the same alphabet and/or grammatical structure, such as English and Chinese. Furthermore, an additional change is noticed with linguistic groups that strongly rely on sounds and audio expressions, rather than written ones. For example, given that Chinese native speakers primarily rely on visual linguistic traits, they might only interact with auditory information when faced with learning or identification tasks that directly require it. So, language and translation are therefore to be understood as significant factors in consumption choices and consumer behaviour, with previous empirical studies which prove their power in shaping the perception of and the attitude towards specific goods.

For all these reasons, we might argue that it is relevant to further analyse the power of language and translation, with a clearer focus on another kind of goods and services, namely cultural and media products traded globally and internationally. We shall pay attention to both the production and distribution part, as well as the appreciation and consumption part by the consumers and audiences.

2.2 Language and translation of audio-visual products: dubbing vs subtitling

When looking at cultural production on a worldwide scale, an interesting concept is the one of Global vs Foreign Consumer Culture Positioning (GCCP, FCCP). In the marketing literature, this notion explains how different consumer segments respond differently to cultural products which present stronger localized versus global elements, one of which is the original language. In the cultural and creative sectors specifically, these two models are relevant as the industry offers products that can already be viewed as “inaccessible” due to their artistic and aesthetic worth, and whose consumption and accessibility may further be hampered by linguistic obstacles.

Looking especially at the film and television industry worldwide, it might be useful to give some context clues about its structure and how it can shape taste and preferences in terms of diversity of content. Park (2015) indicates that the global theatrical industry is overwhelmingly dominated by

American films and TV shows. The economic force of the American media market can be used to describe this one-way flow, as the budget and quality of media products are heavily influenced by the size of the main (domestic) market, especially due to their characteristics as public goods. In fact, the budget for producing higher-quality material increases as the domestic market grows, giving the country an advantage in the global market as well.

Furthermore, it has been argued that cultural and linguistic distance affects the reception of foreign media, as people tend to prefer either local content or content that is more familiar to them in terms of culture, traditions, visible artifacts, etc. Indeed, worldwide charts and tracking of entertainment and media consumption show that films and TV series are still watched and appreciated very much locally, despite an environment of globalization and frequent back-and-forth intercultural interactions (FlixPatrol, 2023).

On the other hand, it is interesting to see how recent years have shown a slow development or even a decline in the U.S. box office and television industry earnings, which at the same time corresponded to unprecedented growth in non-American cinema and television industries, with rising nations like China, India, and Korea seeing substantial development in their film markets not only locally, but globally as well (Jin, 2019). The value of non-English productions is also starting to be recognized by prestigious and symbolic institutions such as the Academy Awards and Golden Globes, which represent a signal of quality and thus allow for such productions to reach even bigger and more diverse audiences.

With this growth in international trade of audio-visual products from once marginalized markets, the need for translation arises. To the best of my knowledge, literature in applied and behavioural economics is still lacking precise studies on the effects of language and translation when it comes particularly to the consumption of international cultural products and media. However, the fields of linguistics and psychology offer a variety of findings and theories regarding linguistic diversity and consequent intermediation, with a definite focus on the translation methods of dubbing and subtitling in audio-video products.

First of all, both dubbing and subtitling as forms of language transfer fall under the umbrella term of “*constrained translation*” (Díaz-Cintas, 1999), which means that both methods imply a loss in terms of word-for-word translation, due to the mandatory synchronization respect that both dubbing and subtitles must accord under the limitations of image and time. In fact, the procedure of word-for-word translation is not possible for either dubbing or subbing, as these techniques must

follow some precise guidelines, for instance, the 6-s rule in subtitling, which indicates that “*a subtitle consisting of 64 characters is displayed for [only] 6 seconds*” (Wissmath *et al.*, 2009).

Scholars seem to have different opinions regarding the consequences of the employment of the two methods, as some assert that dubbing can be more entertaining and enjoyable than subtitles. Indeed, it is argued that a significant benefit of dubbing is the ability to watch foreign content without major effort and without the additional task of reading. For instance, as the actors appear to speak the audience’s language, it makes it easier to identify with them and perpetuate what is called “*the cinematic illusion*” (Díaz-Cintas, 1999). According to research, viewers who are used to this technique find dubbed content to be less artificial and more engaging (Koolstra *et al.*, 2002). This might also indicate habituation to a lack of synchronicity between the actor’s lip movements and dubbing jargon, which often differs from ordinarily spoken language (Antonini & Chiaro, 2009). The literature has similarly linked the psychological closeness of a language to a consumer to greater perceived emotionality of the message, higher levels of attention, message recognition, and message processing effectiveness (Scarpi *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, the decision to dub a film in a different language can be seen as a means of bridging any potential cultural gaps that a viewer might experience with the characters and their modes of communication; however, these gaps are still present in the film’s setting, symbols, and messages, demanding a “suspension of disbelief” if the viewer wants to fully identify with the people on screen (Díaz-Cintas, 1999).

On the other hand, some experts also believe that subtitled content can enhance the authenticity and naturalness of the viewing experience by maintaining the original soundtrack and voices. Some points in favour of subtitling underlined by research are the preservation of the original acting performance, the possibility of better information processing, and the fact that subtitles are typically less expensive than dubbing (Wissmath *et al.*, 2009).

Furthermore, some authors theorize that the audience’s response can also differ: while dubbing allows viewers to focus on the visual aspects or alternatively comprehend the dialogue even if they are not directly watching the film, subtitles require a certain level of literacy on the part of the viewer, who must also take up the double effort of having to read the discursive material codified in the target language, as well as following the plot development encoded in the images. Subtitles thus divide the audience’s attention, but still, they are necessary to understand the original dialogue in a foreign language (Matamala *et al.*, 2017).

Despite the differences presented, previous empirical and scientific evidence seems to show that, in terms of cognitive effects, the two translation methods have equal results. As a matter of fact,

dubbing not only seems to show no advantage over subtitling, although the latter is usually considered to be more “cognitively demanding”, but empirical data also demonstrate that subtitling may improve some aspects of film and TV performance (Perego *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, the study conducted by Wissmath *et al.* (2009) indicates that both dubbing and subtitling have the same effects on flow and transportation, but only if the audience is used to these translation techniques. This means that the choice of consuming TV shows or films either in their dubbed or subtitled form is also influenced by the viewer’s ability and habit to encode messages and their frequency of consumption of this kind of content.

Some further points that have been brought forward in the dubbing and subtitling debate regard the so-called “hedonic experience”, which is the pleasure that an individual feels while consuming an audio-visual product, without necessarily needing to recognize or encode a deeper meaning. Studies show that a person’s first language outperforms any language acquired later in life in terms of processing effectiveness by influencing the emotional intensity of the message. Foreign languages, however, can more effectively grab the recipients’ interest (Scarpi *et al.*, 2020). Although also in this case scholars seem to disagree on the impact of the translation method on film enjoyment; empirical studies such as the one conducted by Perego *et al.* (2015) assess that while the perceived cognitive effort remained mostly identical in the two situations, the translation approach altered film appreciation and hedonic response, but only marginally. Thus, the results of this research indicate that dubbing in the primary language of an individual is not necessarily related to a higher level of film enjoyment.

Overall, we can see that based on previous studies, it is hard to state whether dubbing is more effective than subtitling or vice versa, in terms of cognition and enjoyment. Thus, we might argue that the reason why some individuals or production companies prefer to use dubbing over subtitling and vice versa might be others.

With this in mind, we might argue that a fundamental role in the consumption choice of dubbed versus subtitled content is played by the issue of habituation for a specific translation technique. As views and preferences are primarily an issue of habit, a person who has been used to just about a lifetime of dubbing, for instance, is unlikely to be convinced to convert to a different style of screen translation (Antonini & Chiaro, 2009). Indeed, as stated by Koolstra *et al.* (2002), the advantages and disadvantages of the two translation methods as perceived by viewers are strongly dependent on habits, and individuals tend to have a strong preference for the translation technique they are most used to. Nootens (1986, in Duarte Silva de Andrade Xavier 2009) sums up the issue of habit and

familiarity as follows: “*the discussion about which deserves preference, dubbing or subtitling, is a waste of time – viewers prefer the system they are used to.*” We shall see how habits of consumption are influenced by external factors such as national context and decisions made by content producers and distributors in the next paragraph.

Moving on, some of the other potential motives which have been highlighted are, for instance, education level and type of education, as well as national background and native language. In fact, factors such as education, background and main language all play a part in the formation of taste and thus affect consumer behavior. Connected to the consumption of cultural goods (but not limited to that), Stigler and Becker (1977) defined the concept of “rational addiction”, which they applied to music consumption. As they explain, the continuous consumption of an art form, such as music or, in our case, dubbed or subtitled TV shows or films, increases the so-called “consumption capital” of an individual, thus also increasing the consumption productivity and reducing the relative cost or effort connected to that activity. In economic terms, this means that the consumer’s marginal utility is considered to increase over time, as tastes change in favour of the good they consume more of, compared to other goods or activities (Stigler & Becker, 1977). Hence, individuals increase consumption as they become more effective at producing the pleasure that results from such activity. Likewise, such theory suggests that education, age and other human capital may have an impact on how exposure affects taste formation and habitus when it comes to the consumption of cultural goods. Indeed, studies such as the one conducted by D’Angelo *et al.* (2010) identify the degree of education as the factor that appears to best account for the demand for cultural goods – specifically performing arts and media – in Italy, proving that the habit of consuming diverse cultural products increases with education.

This is also connected to the theory of the cultural omnivore, which indicates that “higher educated” individuals are more likely to consume more heterogeneous genres of cultural goods. Because of this, we might also expect that people with higher education levels could be more open to consuming foreign films or TV shows in their different translated forms, especially if they speak more than one language. Furthermore, in a country like Italy whose education system offers different paths to pursue the study of languages, both at a high school level as well as at university, the type of education one has received might impact their choices of consuming dubbed or subtitled content.

On the other hand, a further potential explanation might be found in a deeper analysis of the dubbing and subtitling industry at national levels, and how they are approached from a business and policy standpoint.

2.3 Dubbing and subtitling: a national perspective.

Looking at national markets and political approaches regarding subtitles or dubbing, recent studies suggest that today more nations use both methods of translation, with differences depending on whether the content is for a movie, television show, or new form of media. In general, some countries in Europe such as Spain, France, Germany, and Italy are more accustomed to dubbing their theatrical releases and TV shows, but this trend seems to be changing with the broader volume of entertainment that is available online. Díaz-Cintas (1999) explains how from a historical and political perspective, the practice of translating commonly used foreign words, and dubbing foreign productions has also previously been introduced in various European nations by policymakers and rulers as a statement of nationalism. In Italy and Spain, respectively, dictators Mussolini and Franco made it a legal requirement, while Hitler actively marketed it as a way to hire actors. In any case, it served as a double-edged ideological instrument. First of all, it supported the domination of a single national language rather than national division caused by having multiple regional languages. Second, it was a subtle method of suppressing, censoring, and modifying the original script's material, intending to reduce foreign influence on the viewers.

As much as the legacy of these laws and regulations might still exist in some countries, in contemporary Europe the reasons behind a country's choice to (mainly) adopt dubbing or subtitling are numerous and diverse; for instance, dubbing is still preferred in countries where there is a majority of single-language-speaking communities and a larger market share for audio-visual products, despite this technique requiring more intensive labour and being more expensive (Riggio, 2010). In fact, even though equipment costs are similar with both methods, due to the limitations and demands of its format, dubbing is a much more complex procedure than subtitling in terms of human labour: a dubbing director, in addition to translators, must oversee the recording of the synchronized translations by voice actors which are carried out in specialist dubbing facilities. All of this adds up to a price that is significantly higher than the more straightforward technique of subtitling (Scarpi *et al.*, 2020). Still, the aforementioned factors helped create a strong dubbing tradition in countries like Italy and Spain regardless of the high cost, also considering the role of the national television companies as an important stakeholder and the significant market portion of (imported) films and TV shows. Additionally, the importance of the dubbing industry in Italy is also

legally demonstrated by the official recognition of adapters as authors in the same percentage as the original screenplay writers, ensuring that the law is in place to defend their rights (Dore & Petrucci, 2021), and its merit is acknowledged with awards such as the International Grand Prize of Dubbing, which is held every year in Rome (Shih, 2020).

Like we have discussed before, attitudes and preferences for translated content are heavily impacted by habituation, which is in turn influenced by national context. Kilborn (1989) states that the “*attitudes of national audiences to subtitling and dubbing are also determined by which mode has become dominant in the country in question [...] and are also influenced by the attitudes to foreign languages and cultures which dominate a particular culture.*” As a consequence, in countries like Italy where more or less all films and TV shows are dubbed (especially the ones broadcasted on national television, or released in cinemas), individuals who regularly consume these products are expected to be more used to dubbing and therefore might have a harder time choosing to watch a film in a foreign language in its original version with subtitles. Moreover, in countries where national television and cinemas only offer dubbed content, it might be harder for consumers to find access to subtitled content and thus not consume it at all. Once more, recalling Stigler and Becker, individuals who have developed a sort of “consumption capital” for dubbed audio-visual products – thanks to the external context and content availability – will likely be less inclined to pick subtitling as their preferred translation method, as it requires a greater effort and they possess more developed skills which help them decode a dubbed film or TV show.

However, more recent studies on younger audiences suggest that there may be room for change. In point of fact, while one might anticipate that dubbing would perform better in a country like Spain given that it is the traditional audio-visual transfer mode, subtitling is becoming more common, and younger generations are less resistant to it (Matamala *et al*, 2017). According to professionals in the localization sector, the reasons behind these shifts are many.

First of all, the rise of streaming platforms has altered the landscape for foreign-language media, enabling access to programs and films at a pace and scale never previously possible. Indeed, the growth of direct-to-consumer streaming channels over the past two to three years has significantly increased the availability of content and thus the market for translation, subtitling, and dubbing services (Shevenock, 2022). On the other hand, it is interesting to see how the industry of translation for audio-visual products is also extremely vulnerable to consumer appreciation and public perception of their performance. Shevenock (2022) reports that professionals feel like the viewing audience is acutely aware of changes, and if anything does not live up to their standards

and the producer's objectives for excellence, they will let everyone know on social media, thus creating a very low barrier of entrance for feedback.

Moreover, in a globalized society, new methods of distributing and consuming audio-visual content, mostly through the Internet in general, are opening up new channels where dubbing is no longer the dominant form. Examples are YouTube videos or the often-illegal spread of (niche) foreign content on specialized websites. Thus, it is possible that in the near future accessing internet series with subtitles, frequently created by fans (fansubbing), might become more common than going to the theatre to see a dubbed movie or turning on the television to see a dubbed movie being aired (Matamala *et al*, 2017), also considering the greater availability of content on such platforms. Indeed, looking at Italy specifically, we can see how in the last 20 years the phenomenon of fansubbing or unofficial subtitling has been playing a central role in the spread and consumption of foreign audio-visual products, with the introduction of these practice in 2005 through the website *ItaSA* (Massidda, 2015). These sorts of fan-produced media are the consequence of the so-called "participatory culture," which includes the cultural creation and interpersonal interactions of fan communities. Through unofficial subtitling, users can freely access and consume films and TV shows from other countries, many of which are also usually not (yet) available on TV channels or official streaming platforms such as Netflix, thus often representing a free (and sometimes only) alternative to watch specific audio-visual products. Nevertheless, fansubbing raises some issues in terms of, for instance, ethical considerations (it is, after all, a violation of copyright), and quality. As a matter of fact, fansubbing is often regarded as a subpar product that frequently contains typos and linguistic errors. Users, however, seem to accept such inaccuracies as unofficial subtitled content is provided for free, and research has also shown that fansubbers, aware of such issues, are quickly adapting to the higher standards of their professional counterparts, thus also employing industrial audio-visual translation features including quality control, accuracy, and production speed. Another interesting point to consider is that fansubbed versions are made available online soon after the original version has been broadcast, which has an impact on the translation industry as well as the marketing of audio-visual items (Dore & Petrucci, 2021). On the other hand, we could expect some viewers to not wish to compromise in terms of quality and morality of the translated content they consume, and thus be willing to pay more for an official and high-quality translation (which often means dubbing) on streaming platforms or official channels, rather than the fansubbing option.

For all the above-mentioned reasons, I believe it would be interesting to look at how the psychological and cognitive approach to dubbing and subtitling, as well as the national context, habitus, education, availability, and alternatives such as fansubbing, can affect and change the

audience's consumption choices and experience. To the best of my knowledge, insight into these specific topics is still lacking in academic literature, thus I would like to try to provide some empirical data on that as well and understand to what extent these factors are relevant.

3. Methods

This chapter will first introduce the research questions, with an explanation of the research hypotheses and methods following up. The section “Survey design” will elaborate on how the main concepts will be operationalized and translated into a measurement tool. Lastly, the section “Sampling and response” will then underline the sampling methods and obtained responses.

3.1 Research question

In the theoretical framework, through a review of previous literature and studies, we have seen that the methods of dubbing and subtitling, despite being forms of “constrained translation” seem to have similar efficiency in terms of message reception and understanding of a TV show or film, and they also can create a similar level of enjoyment and engagement in the audiences (Wissmath *et al.*, 2009; Perego *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, a significant influence of factors such as national context and (educational) background on the preferred translation method and the consequent choice of consumption and appreciation can be expected, as different standards and (business) decisions coming from the localization and translation industry itself shape the supply and thus what viewers can and are used to consuming (Antonini & Chiaro, 2009; Riggio, 2010). Furthermore, it has been asserted that the cultural and linguistic distance underlined by different translation methods has an impact on how foreign media is received, as audiences tend to favour either local or more familiar content. In spite of a globalized world and numerous cross-cultural connections, movies are nevertheless watched and loved a lot locally, or in a way in which potential cultural distance and the required efforts are thus reduced, meaning, for instance, in a dubbed form (Jin, 2019). On the other hand, we have seen that new forms of TV and film consumption are emerging, especially through online platforms and services, and these forms often either offer or imply the consumption of subtitled content as well. Still, empirical research and evidence on the impact of dubbing vs subtitling on consumption choices in terms of foreign audio-visual products is still limited and would require further analysis.

This study aims to integrate the various concepts presented in the previous chapters and apply them to consumer behaviour in the entertainment sector, particularly with regard to foreign TV series and movies. I would like to know if the linguistic and cultural barriers that are highlighted by dubbing and subtitling can in any way limit the consumption a foreign product, lowering the potential consumer’s initial readiness to buy it or their willingness to pay in order to access such product. As a way to test this, the consumption of either dubbed or subtitled content by Italian young adults will be investigated. Therefore, the primary research question will be “To what extent

does the use of dubbing or translating influence the attitude and consumption choices of individuals when it comes to foreign entertainment products?”. The analysis will be carried out with a quantitative methodology and the test of hypotheses.

3.2 Hypotheses and Methods

In order to answer the research questions, it was necessary to convert various concepts into quantifiable variables. The main dimensions to analyse were thus (i) the dubbing or subtitling of audio-visual products as available on TV channels or streaming platforms, (ii) the attitude and appreciation of such products from the audience, and (iii) the public’s willingness to consume again or pay for access. An additional variable to be considered is the “other factors” variable, which includes national context and personal/educational background of the viewer. According to the literature, people who come from a nation where dubbed TV shows and movies are the only ones available on national television and in movie theatres are likely to choose to watch these items in their dubbed form, and this translation form can thus provide a more positive viewing experience for them. Such viewing experience can then affect their choice to consume more or pay in order to access the translated product.

Based on these notions, I hence established some hypotheses to be tested, which were:

H1: The dubbing of TV shows or films affects consumers’ attitudes toward the show or film more positively than subtitling.

H1a: The attitude of consumers towards a TV show/film created by the translation method can impact their intention to repeat the experience.

H1b: The attitude of consumers towards a TV show/film created by the translation method can impact their willingness to pay in order to access the product.

This first hypothesis and sub-hypotheses are based on previous studies such as the one conducted by Scarpi *et al.* (2020), which came to the conclusion that in the case of advertisements, dubbed content creates a more positive attitude towards the product, and it positively affects the viewer’s choice to (again) buy and consume the product. I thus wished to test whether the same results are visible in relation to cultural goods such as TV series and films.

The second hypothesis I established is:

H2: The relationship between series or film dubbing/subtitling and attitude toward the series or film is impacted by other factors, such as national context and personal background (spoken languages, education).

This hypothesis was created following two main notions; first of all, the effect of national context on consumption choices of foreign audio-visual products (Antonini & Chiaro, 2009; Perego *et al.*, 2015), as well as the impact of education on cultural consumption (D'Angelo *et al.*, 2010).

As for the data collection, I chose to employ the quantitative method of a survey, as I wished to gather some direct empirical information and evidence on the correlation between dubbing/subtitling and consumption choices, which is mostly still lacking in economic literature. Furthermore, I wanted to obtain results that could be generalizable for the population.

For these reasons, I chose to start with a conceptual model adapted by Scarpi *et al.* (2020), in which I included the variables of preference for dubbing/subtitling, attitude toward the product, repeated consumption likelihood, willingness to pay/consume, and national context/other factors. Specifically, in the model the attitude toward the film/series mediates the film/series dubbing or subtitling —repeated consumption likelihood and the film/series dubbing or subtitling — WTP/consume relationships, while national context/other factors moderate the relationship between film/series dubbing or subtitling and attitude toward the film/series. The model can be found in Appendix A.

After the collection of data, the results were examined with correlation and regression analyses in order to either prove or dispute the stated hypotheses and understand whether a correlation can be found between the translation method and the attitude and (economic) appreciation towards the audio-visual product.

3.3 Survey design

The survey was administered in Italian, and its translation can be found in Appendix B. Based on the model, I created a questionnaire consisting of 27 questions, the majority of which are closed-ended and have predetermined response options, as to prevent the respondent to personally interpret the questions. The hypotheses that have been developed based on the literature and the survey questions hence take into account the aspects of dubbing or subtitling audio-visual products that are available on TV channels or streaming services, the audience's attitude and appreciation of these

products, and the public's willingness to consume these products again or pay for access, as well as the audience's background and national setting.

The survey was divided into four parts, the first of which comprised questions 1-6 related to sampling (age, gender, national origin, and level of education). The second part of the survey (questions 7-15) included questions regarding spoken languages and frequency and habits of consumption concerning foreign TV shows and films, also containing an open question related to the top three countries of production of the most frequently consumed TV shows and films. The third section (questions 16-21) was focused on the effects of dubbing vs subtitling, meaning the attitude towards the products, repeated consumption likelihood, and willingness to pay for dubbed and subtitled content. These variables were operationalized through the use of a Likert scale, establishing different levels of agreement with the sentences presented in the question. Lastly, the last section consisted of questions 22-27 related to the effects of national context and background on consumer behaviour in relation to the translation methods.

3.4 Sampling and Response

The unit of analysis of this research is young Italians between the ages of 16 and 30. With this, I mean either people who possess Italian nationality and/or that have grown up in Italy and thus speak Italian and have access to the Italian TV and film industry. The reason for this choice is that such individuals will most likely have been exposed to dubbed content on national TV and in movie theatres during their entire childhood, as Italy is known as a dubbing country. Furthermore, I wished to understand whether younger generations are showing some sort of changes in their taste and consumption, given the new possibilities as provided by technological development and online spaces. Probability sampling, voluntary response sampling, and snowball sampling are the three sampling methods that were employed in this study to select a representative sample of respondents for the questionnaire.

The survey was created on Qualtrics and distributed online, making sure that the respondents coincided with the target population. It was administered to three main groups: high school students (ages 16 to 19), university students (both undergraduate and graduate), and young individuals who are already working. Respondents were contacted either by mail or through social media such as Facebook and Instagram. The message which was used to contact respondents can be found in Appendix C. Specifically, high school students from a school located in Legnano, Italy, were contacted via mail through one of their teachers who is in the researcher's network. In the case of social media, announcements were made in groups and communities, and individuals who met the

criteria for respondent characteristics could choose to engage in the study on their own. Each respondent was also asked to share the questionnaire with others in their network who meet the same requirements. A minimum of 150 respondents was sought to guarantee that the findings are generalizable and that no inferences are made based solely on outliers. Being administered online, the survey was not limited to a specific geographical area but rather received responses from all over the country.

The survey gathered a total of 201 responses, out of which 165 (82.5%) were completed and thus considered successful. The response differed in the three main groups that comprised the sample: firstly, out of the 200 high school students who were contacted, 50% (100) cooperated with the research. Furthermore, among the university students and young workers who were reached through a self-selected sampling method, 72% of the responses were successful.

The obtained sample mainly corresponds to the desired population, even though a greater percentage of females (69.7%) was observed, as well as a significant proportion of individuals who are more or less familiar with foreign languages and are attending or have attended schools or university programs related to the study of languages and translation (58%). This factor needs to be underlined as it might differ from the average familiarity or knowledge of foreign languages in the population. Indeed, in Italy the standard for all middle and secondary schools is to have mandatory English classes for everyone, while a smaller number of specializations – such as Liceo Linguistico (high school with a focus on language learning) or Liceo delle Scienze Umane (high school focused on psychology and sociology, literally *High School of Human Sciences*) – have mandatory classes for at least one or two additional languages (usually French, German, Spanish). Moreover, in such schools not only the language is taught, but rather also the literature and culture of a country. So, people who are attending or have previously attended such schools might have a broader knowledge of different languages, as they are part of the school curriculum. On the other hand, individuals who have attended other kinds of secondary education, in which English is the only mandatory foreign language, will most likely have a smaller knowledge of foreign languages. The situation is similar at the university level, as most courses which are not specialized in languages or translation only have around one or two mandatory English exams. Hence, having a majority of respondents with a background in institutions like Liceo Linguistico or degrees in Translation/Linguistics might provide results which might not be completely representative of the target population.

This methodological chapter demonstrated the usage of the data from the theoretical framework and its application in the creation of hypotheses and research questions. By performing tests and

using the responses of young Italian audiences, the hypotheses draw on current theories and fill in knowledge gaps. The results of the analysis will also be presented, together with illustrations of these tests, in the following chapter.

4. Results

In this chapter, an overview of the responses will be provided. After a report of descriptive statistics, bivariate statistics will be employed to look for any correlations that might be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Then, several statistical tests will help determine if the aforementioned hypotheses are true or not. The solution to the primary research question and a discussion of the research results will be presented in the following and last chapter.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

As mentioned, the unit of analysis for this research was young Italians between the ages of 16 and 30 who belonged to either one of the following groups: high school students, university students, or young workers. As can be seen in Table 4.1, out of the 165 respondents, 41.2% are aged 18-21, followed by 28.5% between the ages of 16 and 17. Given the desired research sample of people under the age of 30, the individuals who were aged 30+ were excluded from the rest of the analysis. As for the gender of the participants, 69.7% of the respondents identified as female, and more than half of the participants (60.6%) are currently high school students (i.e., their highest completed education level is middle school). 17% of the participants have graduated high school and 22.4% have completed at least one level of university education. Such observations are relevant to our research as educational level has been identified as one of the main factors that influence cultural demand and consumption in Italy (D'Angelo *et al*, 2010). Thus, we might see that different education levels play a part in the diversity of consumption and the “openness” to different cultures and languages. The different academic specializations (i.e., related or unrelated to languages) were considered in the following block of questions.

Two questions were then asked about nationality and current country of residence: all the respondents indicated that they either possess an Italian nationality and have grown up in Italy, or alternatively, they have foreign origins but have grown up in Italy and still live there, thus being accustomed to the Italian TV and cinema industry and its forms of translation.

In the second block, some more questions were asked regarding the linguistic education or background of the respondents. Overall, more than half of the participants (58%) had some sort of linguistic education or background, meaning that they either attended or are currently attending a high school specialized in languages (Liceo Linguistico), a Bachelor's or Master's Degree in Linguistics or Translation and Liaison Interpreting (Facoltà di Lingue, Mediazione Linguistica), or

extracurricular language classes. Moreover, among the respondents, 81.2% of the individuals stated that they speak 2 to 3 languages at an at least intermediate level (B1). The most spoken languages within this population are English (150 respondents, 90%), Spanish (109 respondents, 66.6%), and French (25 respondents, 15%).

Table 4.1: Socio-demographics of the respondents

<i>VARIABLES</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
<i>AGE</i>		
<i>16-17</i>	47	28.5
<i>18-21</i>	68	41.2
<i>22-25</i>	43	26
<i>26-30</i>	4	2.4
<i>30+</i>	3	1.8
<i>GENDER</i>		
<i>FEMALE</i>	115	69.7
<i>MALE</i>	49	29.7
<i>OTHER</i>	1	.6
<i>EDUCATION LEVEL</i>		
<i>MIDDLE SCHOOL</i>	100	60.6
<i>HIGH SCHOOL</i>	28	17
<i>BACHELOR'S DEGREE</i>	30	18.2
<i>MASTER'S DEGREE</i>	7	4.2
<i>LINGUISTIC EDUCATION</i>		
<i>YES</i>	94	57
<i>NO</i>	71	43
<i>SPOKEN LANGUAGES</i>		
<i>1</i>	28	17
<i>2-3</i>	134	81.2
<i>3+</i>	3	1.8

4.1.2 Frequency and habits of consumption variables

The following part of the survey regarded the frequency of consumption of foreign films and TV shows, as well as individual preferences for dubbed or subtitled content. The averages for variables are shown in Table 4.1.2, however as these numerical averages are based on ordinal data, Table 4.1.3 in Appendix D gives a summary of the Likert scales.

Overall, most of the population regularly watches TV shows or films produced in countries other than Italy, with the majority of responses being between the categories ‘often’ or ‘very often’ (options 4 and 5); however, the distribution of these choices is quite spread among all the frequencies, with a significant number of individuals which on the other hand rarely consume foreign audio-visual products ($M=3.52$, $SD=1.36$). The top 3 countries of origin of the most watched TV shows and films were, in order, the US, Italy, and Spain. These results align with the analysis of preferences for video on demand in Italy by country of origin as of May 10, 2023, which show a top 5 of respectively the US, Italy, the UK, Spain, and France (Flixpatrol, 2023). The response also indicated a growth in the consumption of foreign audio-visual products especially thanks to streaming services and platforms ($M=4.03$, $SD=0.82$). Indeed, in Italy, it is mainly through both official and unofficial (i.e. fansubbing websites) streaming platforms and services that people can access more foreign content, especially when it is not regularly broadcasted on national television or on Pay TV, as these outlets tend to favour local or popular American/English productions and have a smaller variety of available products. Additionally, as we have seen in the literature, the structure of streaming services allows users to have a vast supply of products that are not limited both in terms of space and time of consumption, thus permitting an increase in viewed content, for instance thanks to the practice of “binge-watching” and back-to-back consumption of all kinds of audio-visual products (Jin, 2019; Dore & Petrucci, 2021; Shevenock, 2022). Hence, the greater consumption of international audio-visual products implies a need for translation, which happens through dubbing or subtitling.

The viewers’ specific preferences for either dubbed or subtitled content were asked in Questions 13 and 14, whose possible answers consisted of a Likert scale. Overall, the collected data shows that more than half of the respondents (56%) indicated that they watch dubbed TV shows or films ‘often’ or ‘very often’ ($M=3.60$, $SD=1.22$), and similarly 52% watch subtitled content ‘often’ or ‘very often’ ($M=3.43$, $SD=1.23$). Thus, we can see that the two forms of consuming translated foreign content do not differ much in terms of preference and habits related to the specific translation method, with individuals consuming both forms in similar or equal quantity, or not showing a clear preference and/or habit towards one or the other. Still, as suggested by the theoretical framework, the two methods can have different impacts on the attitude toward the

specific TV show or film, and on the general experience of consumption (Díaz-Cintas, 1999; Scarpi *et al*, 2020). This will be tested in the following paragraphs.

Table 4.1.2 Average consumption

<i>VARIABLES</i>	<i>MEAN</i>	<i>STANDARD DEVIATION (SD)</i>
Consumption of foreign tv shows or films	3.52	1.36
Increased consumption thanks to streaming platforms	4.03	.82
Consumption of dubbed content	3.60	1.22
Consumption of subtitled content	3.43	1.23

4.2 Bivariate analysis

In the following paragraph, we shall see if and how the consumption habits of translated content through either the method of dubbing or subtitling affect the viewer’s reception of the audio-visual products themselves. This is done through bivariate analysis.

These elements were presented through a Likert Scale, which established different levels of agreement, and then transformed into the variables *Consumption of dubbed content*, *Positive attitude towards (dubbed) content*, *Consumption of subtitled content*, *Positive attitude towards (subtitled) content*. A correlation analysis was run, and the results can be found in Table 4.2. They show, first of all, a positive and significant correlation between the consumption of dubbed TV shows or films and the attitude towards this form of content ($R=0.69$): the more one watches products which are dubbed, the more they can appreciate the product itself and the form of translation. This recalls the theory according to which dubbed content is perceived as less fake and more interesting by viewers who are accustomed to this procedure, as well as easier to digest and understand (Díaz-Cintas, 1999). Similarly, the consumption of subtitled content is significantly and positively correlated with the attitude towards subtitled content ($R=0.66$). Overall, these results show that the two translation methods can thus positively impact the consumer’s appreciation of the TV show or film they are used for.

However, the two forms of translation are not correlated with one another in terms of positive reception. This could mean that young Italians do not necessarily appreciate translated foreign content regardless of the translation form, but rather they show different attitudes towards the product also based on the translation method which is used and that they are accustomed to. As a matter of fact, we see a strong negative association between the attitude towards subbed content and the attitude towards dubbed content ($R=-0.79$): we can thus imagine that the more an individual shows a positive attitude towards subtitles as a form of translation, the least they will appreciate

dubbing. Like the literature underlined, when the technique of subtitles is employed, individuals (especially those who are more accustomed to such practice) can have a better viewing experience, thanks to the perceived improved naturalness and authenticity of the product, through the preservation of the original voices, music, and localized (cultural) setting. Moreover, the cultural and linguistic difference which is more strongly perceived by subtitling might further catch the viewer's interest (Wissmath *et al*, 2009; Scarpi *et al.*, 2020).

On the other hand, subtitling-aficionados seem to perceive dubbed content as more artificial and less realistic, hence creating some form of distance between them and the show or film they are watching which is rendered into a more negative attitude towards dubbed content. Similarly, we can see how the consumption of either form of translated content has a moderately strong association with the appreciation of the opposite form ($R=-0.56$). This shows that in both cases, the more an individual is used to/consumes audio-visual products with a specific translation method (regardless of how they feel about it), the less they will have a positive attitude towards the other.

In order to understand where these differences come from, I applied a further filter to the results and split the responses of individuals who have some sort of linguistic education from those of individuals who do not. This filtering has shown how participants who have some linguistic background have indicated a more neutral attitude towards dubbing and a very positive attitude towards subtitling, while on the other hand, participants who have not received a linguistic education show a very positive attitude towards dubbing and a negative attitude towards subtitling.

Thus, overall, we can expect a more positive attitude towards dubbed content by the entire sample, also shown in the stronger correlation between its consumption and appreciation, which might suggest that dubbing influences the attitude towards a TV show or film more positively than subtitling, as suggested by our first hypothesis. We shall see this in the next paragraph.

Table 4.2: correlation between forms of translation and positive attitude

	CONSUMPTION OF DUBBED CONTENT	POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS (DUBBED) CONTENT	CONSUMPTION OF SUBTITLED CONTENT	POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS (SUBTITLED) CONTENT
CONSUMPTION OF DUBBED CONTENT	1	.69	-.51	-.56
POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS (DUBBED) CONTENT	.69	1	-.56	-.79
CONSUMPTION OF SUBTITLED CONTENT	-.51	-.56	1	.66
POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS (SUBTITLED) CONTENT	-.56	-.79	.66	1

4.3 Hypothesis 1

The correlation between dubbing as a form of translation and the positive attitude towards a dubbed TV show or film in young Italian audiences has been analysed here and then compared to the relationship between subtitling and the positive attitude towards the product. Overall, the results as reported in Table 4.3 show that, in the entire sample, the appreciation of a specific product related to its dubbed form ($M=3.36$, $SD=1.28$) is slightly higher than the appreciation for a subtitled product ($M=3.06$, $SD=1.23$).

Similar results have already been seen in the previous paragraph, which explained how dubbing is more strongly correlated with the positive attitude of an individual towards a TV show or film, compared to subtitling which shows a slightly weaker correlation to the consumer's appreciation. Moreover, the population overall seems to have a more positive view of dubbed content, regardless of their background.

From these results, it can be stated that among the population, the translation technique of dubbing has a significant, even if small, more positive effect on the appreciation of a foreign audio-visual product such as a TV show or film.

H1 : accepted. The collected data illustrates how, among young Italians, the dubbing of TV shows and movies has a more positive impact on viewers' opinions of the media compared to subtitles; however, with the difference being slight, we could expect such results to be biased by the sample and other factors. Such inquiries will be tackled in our second hypothesis.

Table 4.3 H1

<i>VARIABLES</i>	<i>MEAN</i>	<i>STANDARD DEVIATION (SD)</i>
Attitude towards (dubbed) content	3.36	1.28
Attitude towards (subtitled) content	3.06	1.23

4.3.2 Hypothesis 1a

This sub-hypothesis wishes to analyse the relationship between the viewer’s appreciation of an audio-visual product created by the translation method and their intention to repeat the experience, meaning watching different content with that specific form of translation and/or thus creating more demand for dubbed or subtitled products. In order to understand such a relationship, I first looked at the responses for questions 18 and 19, which asked, respectively, whether the respondents would consume or could imagine consuming more dubbed/subtitled TV shows or films in the future. In this case, it was interesting to see how more individuals are open to repeated consumption when it comes to subtitled content ($M=3.96$, $SD=0.87$) compared to dubbed content ($M=3.22$, $SD=1.18$), with the latter also presenting a good percentage of neutral responses. The results are summarized in Table 4.3.2. Thus, we can here imagine that the positive attitude towards subtitled content, even if slightly lower compared to the one created by dubbing, as deduced from the previous hypothesis, has a stronger impact on future consumption. Such analysis can be supported by the theory of rational addiction (Stigler & Becker, 1977), as we can expect young individuals who can develop some sort of consumption capital when it comes to subtitles to consume – or imagine consuming – more in the future as the effort and cost required to do so is reduced. This observation is also supported by studies such as the one conducted by Matamala *et al.* (2017) which underlines how, in younger audiences, there is a larger openness and appreciation of subtitled content, as people grow more used to it through, for instance, the consumption of fan-subbed TV shows or films on streaming websites. This can hence also impact their future demand for this kind of content. Indeed, as we shall see later, individuals who are interested in niche content (or simply content which is not available on official outlets or streaming platforms) are basically forced to consume it in its subtitled form, even if it would not be their first choice.

The second part of this analysis consisted of a correlation test between the two variables, whose results can be found in Table 4.3.3. Such a test provided the following results: there is a strong association ($R=0.59$) between the positive attitude created by dubbing as a translation method and the repeated consumption likelihood of dubbed content. Similarly, a strong (but slightly less so) association ($R=0.54$) was identified between the positive attitude created by subtitling as a

translation method and the repeated consumption likelihood of subtitled content. So, although the population indicated a greater openness to future consumption of subtitled audio-visual products, this openness can be attributed slightly less to the positive perception of the product, compared to the dubbed equivalent. Thus, there can be other motivations for which people would consume more subtitled content in the future: for instance, such can be, also considering our sample, language learning motives, availability, or personal taste.

H1a : accepted. Overall, the survey and statistical analysis results show that the attitude towards an audio-visual product as created by the translation method plays a significant role in the repeated consumption likelihood and consequent demand for more similar goods, even if its relevance for subtitled TV shows or films is slightly lower.

Table 4.3.2 Average for hypothesis 1a

<i>VARIABLES</i>	<i>MEAN</i>	<i>STANDARD DEVIATION (SD)</i>
Repeated consumption likelihood for dubbed content	3.22	1.18
Repeated consumption likelihood for subtitled content	3.96	.87

Table 4.3.3 Correlation for hypothesis 1a

	ATTITUDE TOWARDS (DUBBED) CONTENT	ATTITUDE TOWARDS (SUBTITLED) CONTENT
REPEATED CONSUMPTION LIKELIHOOD FOR DUBBED CONTENT	.59	-
REPEATED CONSUMPTION LIKELIHOOD FOR SUBTITLED CONTENT	-	.54

4.3.3 Hypothesis 1b

The second sub-hypothesis aims to understand the relationship between the attitude towards a product as created by the translation forms and the willingness to pay in order to access this type of content. Firstly, we can analyse the responses to questions 20 and 21, which respectively asked if individuals were willing to pay more to access (more) TV shows and films with dubbing and if they were willing to pay more to access (more) TV shows and films with official subtitles, rather than, in both cases, watch such content on unofficial streaming websites with subtitles created by other viewers (thus being the case of fansubbing).

The responses to these two questions indicated that the population is mostly willing to pay more in order to access dubbed content ($M=3.54$, $SD=1.15$) and also to access official subtitles rather than fan-made ones ($M=3.22$, $SD=1.24$). The result summary is provided in Table 4.3.4. These results can be explained by two instances: firstly, it is extremely hard to come across free fan-made or user-made dubbed content; as dubbing is a complex and expensive practice, this translation method of TV series and films is usually only provided by official channels such as national or pay television, as well as streaming platforms such as Netflix, Prime Video, etc., as they have the means to supply it to their viewers. So, for individuals who wish to consume dubbed content, official entertainment outlets are the only options.

Moreover, with the phenomenon of fansubbing that has been present in Italy for around 20 years, young consumers have gotten used to being able to access content which is not available on official outlets for free and with included translation in the form of subtitling (Dore & Petrucci, 2021). Thus, they might be less willing to spend money to access official subtitling when they already have access to the related products for free.

A correlation analysis was also run to understand the association between the variable of positive attitude for dubbed/subtitled content and the variable of willingness to pay to access such content. The summary of these results can be found in Table 4.3.5. A moderate positive association ($R=0.49$) was detected between the appreciation for dubbed content and the willingness to pay in order to access it, thus supporting what was previously mentioned. Indeed, this result underlines once more the demand for dubbed content, which is less price sensitive as people are aware that there is no free alternative, in contrast to subtitling.

On the other hand, the analysis reveals a weak association between the positive attitude created by subtitling as a translation method and the willingness to pay to access (official) subtitled content ($R=0.21$). As already recalled, this conclusion can be explained by different existing phenomena, such as the already present free subtitled version of foreign TV shows or films through the common practice of fansubbing in Italy, as well as the lack of interest in more high quality (paid) subtitles among youngsters. Another antecedent for this result can be the lack of interest in more niche content which is not already present on streaming platforms or official channels. These results, however, might have been influenced by the sample. Overall, especially when it comes to subtitling, we can see that people seem to be price-sensitive, but not quality sensitive. As the sample includes young people, most of which are not yet economically independent (for instance, high school students), we can assume that their willingness to pay for different qualities of subtitling is quite

low. Still, it would be interesting to see if these results change with older generations or individuals who are more economically stable. I leave such inquiries for future research.

H1b : rejected. Although a significant part of the respondents state that would pay more to access either dubbed or officially subtitled content, such choice is mostly not significantly correlated with their appreciation of the TV series or film, but rather it is impacted by availability and personal interest for a specific type of content.

Table 4.3.4 Average for hypothesis 1b

<i>VARIABLES</i>	<i>MEAN</i>	<i>STANDARD DEVIATION (SD)</i>
Willingness to pay for dubbed content	3.54	1.15
Willingness to pay for subtitled content	3.22	1.24

Table 4.3.5 Correlation for hypothesis 1b

	ATTITUDE TOWARDS (DUBBED) CONTENT	ATTITUDE TOWARDS (SUBTITLED) CONTENT
WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR DUBBED CONTENT	.49	-
WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR SUBTITLED CONTENT	-	.21

4.4 Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis aims to analyse whether the way individuals consume and appreciate either dubbed or subtitled films or TV shows is impacted by factors other than their preferences for the translation method in itself, which can be, for instance, the national context and audio-visual industry which surrounds the person; the languages they speak and have studied, the availability of dubbed and subtitled content. For this reason, it is important to recall that Italy is a so-called “dubbing country”, meaning that all the audio-visual products which are either broadcasted or released in cinema are translated with dubbing, and it is quite rare to find subtitled versions of films or TV shows available on outlets such as the national television channels or in movie theatres. As explained by Riggio (2010), the main reasons behind the choice of dubbing are, first of all, a great population that speaks a single language as well as a larger market share for television and cinema. Still, with the advent of streaming platforms and online streaming websites in the last 15/20 years, which most of the time offer various translation methods, watching a show or movie in its original language with subtitles in a large range of languages has become a possibility as well.

On the other hand, another variable that might affect the choice and appreciation of either dubbed or subtitled content is the linguistic education of an individual. With linguistic education, I mean the ability to speak other languages in addition to their mother tongue (which here I assumed is Italian) and a basic level of English – which is taught in all secondary schools –, thanks to, for instance, mandatory classes at school/university or extracurricular courses (for instance, they have attended Liceo Linguistico). Indeed, as recalled in paragraph 4.2, individuals who have received linguistic education have different attitudes towards the two translation methods compared to individuals who do not have any linguistic background.

All these components have been taken into account in this last analysis. First of all, we shall have a look at the survey results themselves. The last six questions of the survey (from 22 to 27) relate to the Italian television and film industry and the personal or educational background of the respondents, in order to understand how they perceive these factors affect their consumption choices regarding dubbed or subtitled content. Overall, most respondents stated that they (mainly) watch dubbed films or TV series as it is what they are accustomed to ($M=3.55$, $SD=1.19$). They do not believe, therefore, that there is a lack of alternatives to dubbed content ($M=2.35$, $SD=0.95$), but rather they agree that it is easy for them to access subtitled content ($M=3.83$, $SD=0.97$). These results can be seen in Table 4.4. Furthermore, more than 80% of the participants indicated that, if they spoke more languages, they would be open to more consumption of audio-visual products in their original languages with original subtitles as well.

Table 4.4 Average for other factors

<i>VARIABLES</i>	<i>MEAN</i>	<i>STANDARD DEVIATION (SD)</i>
Habit for dubbed content	3.55	1.19
Lack of alternatives	2.35	.95
Easy access to subtitled content	3.83	.97

Given the context of Italy as a dubbing country and such form being the most commonly employed, I decided to see how such elements can impact the appreciation of the less used form of subtitling, to which audiences might be less accustomed to. Hence, a regression analysis was here run in order to understand whether the positive attitude towards subtitled content is indeed mediated by such factors which are not connected to personal taste or preferences. The multiple regression model with the appreciation for subtitled content as the dependent variable and the linguistic education, number of spoken languages, habit for dubbed content, lack of alternatives, easy accessibility to subtitles, and potential additional supply of subtitled content as independent variables is significant, $F(6, 165) = 14.62$, $p < 0.001$. Thus, the regression model helps explain how

the positive attitude towards subtitled audio-visual products is affected by factors other than personal taste or preferences, but its accuracy is limited: the independent variable can all be used to predict 36% of the variations in positive attitude for dubbed or subtitled content ($R^2 = 0.36\%$). These results are summarized in Table 4.4.2.

Table 4.4.2 Regression model for predicting the positive attitude towards subtitled content ($N=165$)

Positive attitude towards subtitled content	
Constant	.96
Linguistic education	.14
N° of spoken languages	.05
Habit for dubbed content	-.22
Easy accessibility	.27
Potential additional supply	.39
R^2	.36
F	14.62

In this significant model, however, the variable lack of alternatives proved to be not significant, with a p-value that is bigger than 0.05. Thus, it is not considered an impactful phenomenon on appreciation for dubbed or subtitled content, also as most respondents stated that they do perceive there is a lack of alternatives to dubbing as a translation method, especially thanks to online services.

Linguistic education $b^* = 0.14$, $t = 1.67$, $p < 0.05$, 95% $CI [-0.02, 0.3]$, habit for dubbed content $b^* = -0.22$, $t = -3.1$, $p = 0.002$, 95% $CI [-0.36, -0.08]$, and easy accessibility to subtitled content $b^* = 0.27$, $t = 3.14$, $p = 0.002$, 95% $CI [0.1, 0.4]$ have a weak association with positive attitude towards subtitled content, while potential additional supply $b^* = 0.39$, $t = 4.8$, $p < 0.0001$, 95% $CI [0.23, 0.55]$ has a significant, moderate correlation. Lastly, the number of spoken languages $b^* = 0.05$, $t = 0.49$, $p < 0.05$, 95% $CI [-0.16, 0.27]$ has a very weak or no association.

From these results, we can expect that an increase of 1 in terms of accessibility to subtitled content can cause a 0.27 increase in the positive attitude towards products translated with this method. Similarly, an additional supply of subtitled content on outlets such as national television or in movie theatres would increase the appreciation for this kind of content by 0.39. Furthermore, as it is negatively correlated, 1 point of additional habit to dubbed content corresponds to a decrease of 0.22 in appreciation for subtitled content. This recalls the results of paragraph 4.2, which showed how greater consumption and appreciation for dubbed content translated into lower appreciation for subtitled content, and vice versa. It is expected that the other independent variables stay the same for all of these impacts.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that here, linguistic education and the number of spoken languages play a relatively smaller role in the consumption and appreciation of subtitles, compared to other factors such as (national) habits, accessibility and availability. Indeed, we can recall the literature which stated that views and preferences are mostly a matter of habit, and they can be strongly influenced by the (national) context of consumption, industry structure and operating principles (Antonini & Chiaro, 2009; Riggio, 2010), even if these other factors only explain about 1/3 of the positive attitude towards translated content. Indeed, these results show how greater attention and supply of subtitled content from powerful outlets such as the Italian national television or cinema companies could play a role in the appreciation and spread of subtitled audio-visual products, thus influencing and opening the public to this new form of consumption. So, consuming subtitled content it is not only a matter of positive attitude and demand from the consumer's perspective, but rather an intertwined relationship with what is available on "offline" channels which are able to reach more or less the entire population.

H2 : accepted. The examination and regression analysis of survey results show that the population is indeed affected by other factors, particularly in terms of external (national) context and supply, which also shape consumption habits, in their appreciation for differently translated content. The positive attitude towards subtitled content is also significantly impacted by what is available through offline suppliers such as cinemas and national television, and hence the accessibility to this form of translated audio-visual products.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This paper aimed to provide an answer to the research question “To what extent does the use of dubbing or subtitling influence the attitude and consumption choices of individuals when it comes to foreign entertainment products?”.

The literature review and theoretical framework provided some starting points in terms of theories and previous studies, which gave some background information and concepts to follow up with our own research. As seen in the chapter above, several hypotheses have been generated and tested in an effort to provide an answer to the research question. The basic conclusion of this chapter is that dubbing and subtitling used in the translation of TV shows and films affect consumers’ behaviors and attitudes, however, the research revealed that this conclusion cannot be taken at face value and has to be expanded upon.

First of all, the analysis of the survey results has shown that overall, the individuals in the population regularly consume foreign audio-visual products, especially through streaming platforms and online streaming, which provide a more diverse offer and a number of advantages compared to national television channels or movie theatres (Jin, 2019). Additionally, the respondents have expressed different tastes and preferences between dubbed or subtitled audio-visual products. However, such preferences weren’t as clear and distinct as expected, and it seems that the respondents are more or less open to consuming both forms of screen translation, even if they might appreciate one more than the other. Considering the sample of the research, this can be a result of the new forms of consumption of TV shows and films which are more popular among youngsters in Italy, such as (illegal) online streaming and fan-subbing, as recalled by the literature as well (Dore & Petrucci, 2021).

We then analysed the viewer’s attitude towards the product as created or impacted by the translation form, reaching the conclusion that such attitude varies between dubbed and subtitled content. Indeed, the survey results have indicated how in the population there is a slightly more positive appreciation for dubbed content, which is both directly confirmed by the responses of the participants, as well as by comparing the correlation between the variables of dubbing/subtitling and positive attitude for (dubbed/subtitled) content. Through these evaluations, we can argue that regardless of the similar preferences for the two translation forms as expressed by the sample in the previous paragraph, a different effect of the two methods on the appreciation of a product can be seen, with dubbing proving to be slightly more effective in creating a positive attitude. These results follow up on findings from previous research on similar topics, which underlined how, in Italian

audiences, dubbed versions of audio-visual content more positively influence the viewer's perspective on the product (Scarpi *et al.*, 2020).

With these results on our minds, we proceeded to analyse how the appreciation for different translated content affects future demand in terms of willingness to consume again, and willingness to pay to access diverse audio-visual products. Indeed, the findings here appear to be more skewed: as a matter of fact, when it comes to repeated consumption likelihood, the respondents themselves show more openness to watching subtitled content, but on the other hand the correlation analysis between the positive attitude for dubbed or subtitled content and the intention to watch more similarly translated content showed once again a more significant result for dubbing, meaning that appreciation for dubbed content is stronger in leading individuals to consume (or want to consume) more of it. I believe these results to also be a consequence of the sampling, as most respondents are quite young and are currently still studying (languages) either in high school or university, and thus it can be expected that as their level of (linguistic) education grows, the better they would speak foreign languages (or even just English), the more they would consume content in its original form with subtitled, rather than dubbed. Furthermore, youngsters in Italy are aware that some TV shows or films which are not released on official outlets will most likely only be available in their subtitled form through streaming websites, and thus they have to be open to this form of translation if they are going to watch these products. On the other hand, the analysis has also shown how individuals who have a real preference for and appreciate subtitled content more are less open to consuming and appreciating dubbed products overall.

We then looked at how the positive attitude toward differently translated content affects the willingness to pay in order to access it. Such an evaluation is relevant as it shows the impact of consumers' appreciation for dubbing or subtitling on effective demand and supply for such forms of content. Indeed, as the two translation practices are strongly different in terms of costs and use opportunities, they are differently available and accessible for different individuals. Considering the dubbing and subtitling landscape in Italy, which differs between official and unofficial outlets, these analyses underlined how young viewers are willing to spend more in order to access additional dubbed content, rather than official subtitled content. As mentioned in the literature, the reason behind this choice can be connected to the extended availability of free unofficial subtitles for TV shows or films on illegal streaming websites, which thus allows everyone who has an Internet connection to access all kinds of audio-visual products, be it blockbusters or niche productions (Dore & Petrucci, 2021). Thus, as young people are most familiar with this consumption practice, and also considering that most of them are not economically independent, we see a low willingness

to pay for official subtitled content, as compared to dubbed content which is only available through official channels.

Lastly, we have analysed which other factors, apart from personal taste and preference, impact the viewer's attitude towards either dubbed or subtitled content, with a specific focus on national context and personal/educational background. Overall, the findings show that around 1/3 of how much an individual appreciates an audio-visual product in terms of its translation forms is impacted by variables other than personal taste and preference. The most significant factors that can contribute to the positive attitude toward dubbed or subtitled content are availability, supply, and – partially – linguistic education. In fact, we have seen how an additional supply of subtitled content on easily accessible outlets such as TV channels and cinemas could result in a stronger appreciation and consumption of such content. Similarly, greater linguistic education and skills would result in a bigger consumption of TV shows and films in their original language, and also with subtitles in their original language, if spoken by the viewer. On the other hand, the habit for dubbed content caused by being surrounded by dubbed products on TV and in cinemas, which happens in a dubbing country like Italy, proves to negatively affect the appreciation of subtitled content. Thus, we can once again confirm that external factors such as national context and educational background have a relevant effect on the attitude towards differently translated audio-visual products.

Overall, the research has proved that the translation methods of dubbing and subtitling as used in media and entertainment products, with a specific focus on television and cinema, have significant power in affecting consumption choices and behaviours. Specifically, young Italian audiences, which grew up with national television and cinemas only broadcasting dubbed versions of foreign TV shows or films, have established some sort of preferences and consumption habits when it comes to translated content. Indeed, we have seen that this population indicates a greater openness to both forms, with smaller differences between the two methods. Still, dubbing is yet a prevalent and stronger choice as it more positively affects the consumer's attitude towards a product and their future consumption. Furthermore, the habit for dubbed content can also negatively affect the attitude towards subtitled content.

Nevertheless, the only slight differences between consumers' preferences and choices as seen here, as well as the relatively new forms of consumption of foreign television and films such as via streaming platforms and unofficial streaming websites, suggest a potential change in the way young Italian audiences deal with international audio-visual products. Indeed, factors such as linguistic education – which is becoming more and more common in Italy –, as well as the growing

accessibility of imported productions, also outside of the American/English context and/or for more niche markets, is allowing a growing openness to diverse forms of translation and communication, and consequently to diverse languages and culture. As slow as this change might be, it is happening, and we can argue that it will have a relevant impact on the future of the entertainment and media industry not only in Italy but worldwide.

This research is, however, limited in terms of sample size and diversification, as it lacked a more diverse representation of young Italian audiences. Furthermore, it did not differentiate between English language audio-visual products, which might be more commonly and easily consumed given the spread of the language, and products in other languages which are not as often learned or spoken among the Italian population, especially if we consider non-European ones such as Chinese, Japanese, etc. Also, the effect of perceived cultural distance was not analysed as deeply. Thus, future research aimed at testing the different impacts of dubbing and subtitling between English productions and productions in other languages, as well as the role of cultural distance, might be relevant.

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Appendix A

Model by Scarpi *et al.* (2020)

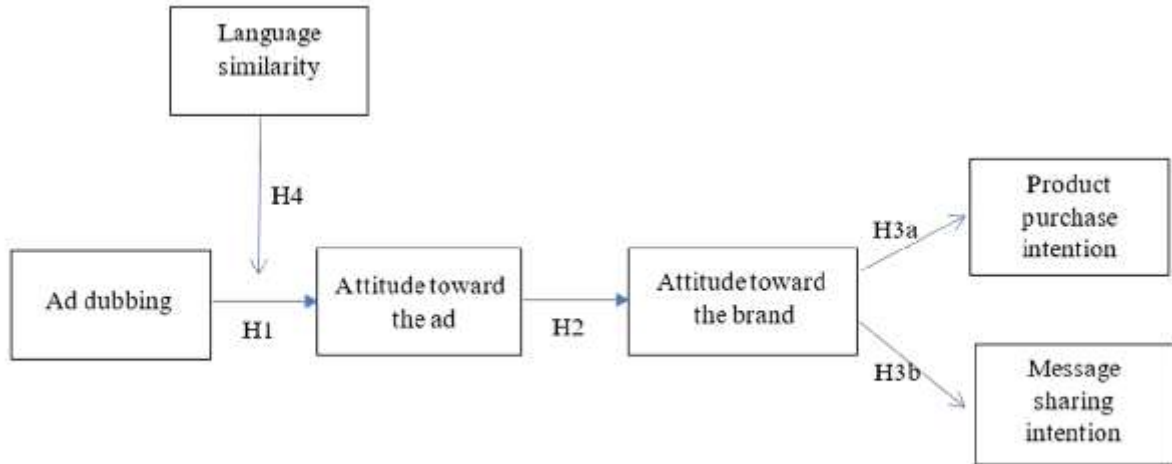
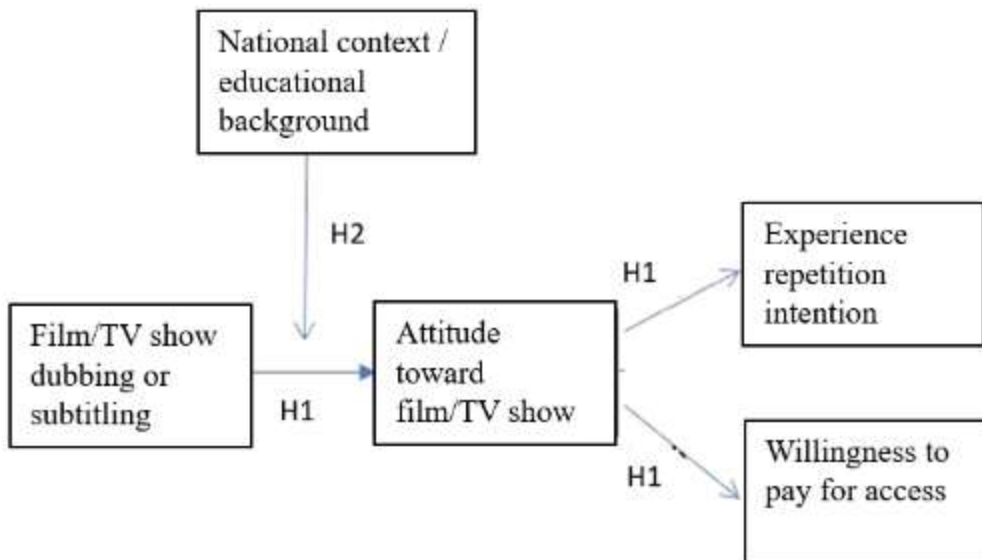


Fig. 1 The conceptual model

Adapted model



Appendix B

Survey questions (translated from Italian)

Block 1 – Sampling	
2. What is your age?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16-17 • 18-21 • 22-25 • 26-30 • 30+
3. What is your gender?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female • Male • Other
4. What is your nationality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italian • Other
5. Where do you live?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italy • Other
6. What is your highest level of education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle school diploma • High school diploma • Bachelor’s degree • Master’s degree

Block 2 – Frequency and habits of consumption	
7. Are you currently studying, or have you previously studied anything related to foreign languages? (e.g., linguistic high school, faculty of linguistic mediation, extra-curricular language courses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
8. How many languages do you speak at an at least intermediate level (B1)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 • 2-3 • 3+
9. What language(s) do you speak, besides Italian, at an at least intermediate level (B1)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • German • French • Spanish • Portuguese • Russian • Arabic • None • Other: please specify which language(s)
10. How often do you watch foreign (non-Italian) movies or TV shows/series?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never • Rarely • Sometimes • Often • Very often

11. What are the countries of production of the TV series and films you watch most often? Indicate 3 (Ex. Italy, United States, Spain)	Open-ended question
12. State how much you agree with the following sentence: Thanks to streaming platforms that offer more possibilities regarding foreign TV series or films, I watch or can imagine watching more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree
13. I usually watch foreign movies or TV shows in their original language with subtitles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree
14. I usually watch foreign movies or TV shows dubbed into Italian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree
15. When it comes to movies or TV shows in a language I don't speak or understand, I prefer dubbing over subtitles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree

Block 3 – Effects of dubbing vs subtitling	
16. I find it more enjoyable and engaging to watch foreign movies or TV shows dubbed in Italian, rather than with subtitles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree
17. I find it more enjoyable and engaging to watch foreign movies or TV shows in original language with subtitles, rather than dubbed ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree
18. In the future, I can imagine watching more movies or series in their original language with subtitles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree
19. In the future, I can imagine watching more movies or series dubbed into Italian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree

<p>20. I would be willing to spend more for a subscription to a platform like Netflix to be able to watch more TV series or movies offered with Italian dubbing, instead of watching them on unofficial streaming sites with subtitles created by other viewers/fans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree
<p>21. I would be willing to spend more on a subscription to a platform like Netflix to be able to watch more TV series or movies offered in their original language with official subtitles, instead of watching them on streaming sites with fan-made subtitles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree

Block 4 – Effect of national context, background	
<p>22. I watch movies or TV shows dubbed into Italian because that's what I'm used to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree
<p>23. I watch movies or TV shows dubbed into Italian because there is no alternative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree
<p>24. It's easy for me to access original language movies or TV series with subtitles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree
<p>25. If cinemas or national television (Rai) offered more content in the original language with subtitles, I would watch more</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree
<p>26. If I spoke more languages, I would watch more original language movies or TV series with original language subtitles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree
<p>27. If I spoke more languages, I would watch more films or TV series in the original language with Italian subtitles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Strongly agree

Appendix C

I need your help!

Hi! My name is Arianna Colombo and I am a student of the Master in Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, the Netherlands. For my thesis I am carrying out research on the impact of translation through dubbing or subtitling on the consumption of foreign TV series and films among young Italians. Can you help me by answering this survey? It is a question of answering 26 questions, almost all with closed answers; the response time is about 5-7 minutes.

https://erasmusuniversity.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e8xctzcoQYBRlea

Thanks a lot for the collaboration!

Kind regards, Arianna Colombo

Mi serve il tuo aiuto!

Ciao! Mi chiamo Arianna Colombo e sono una studentessa del Master in Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship alla Erasmus University di Rotterdam, Paesi Bassi. Per la mia tesi sto svolgendo una ricerca sull'impatto della traduzione tramite doppiaggio o sottotitolaggio sul consumo di serie TV e film stranieri tra i giovani italiani. Puoi darmi una mano rispondendo a questo sondaggio? Si tratta di rispondere a 26 domande, quasi tutte a risposta chiusa; il tempo di risposta è di circa 5-7 minuti.

https://erasmusuniversity.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e8xctzcoQYBRlea

Grazie mille per la collaborazione!

Distinti saluti, Arianna Colombo

Appendix D

Table 4.1.3 Specification Likert-scale (translated from Italian)

Question	Description	Likert scale
10	How often do you watch foreign (non-Italian) TV shows or films?	Scale from 1 to 5, with 1: never, 2: rarely, 3: sometimes, 4: often, 5: very often
12	With streaming platforms offering more possibilities in terms of foreign products, I consume or can imagine consuming more of them	Scale from 1 to 5, with 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 4: agree, 5: strongly agree
13	I usually watch foreign films or TV shows in their original language with subtitles	Scale from 1 to 5, with 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 4: agree, 5: strongly agree
14	I usually watch foreign films or TV shows /dubbed in my own language	Scale from 1 to 5, with 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 4: agree, 5: strongly agree